

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please CANCEL claims 2, 3 and 17-20 without prejudice or disclaimer. Please AMEND the claims and ADD new claims in accordance with the following:

1. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) An electrical contacting device comprising:

a plurality of current paths connected in parallel to each other; and

a plurality of electrical contact points each having a first contact and a second contact that are mechanically opened and closed;

a plurality of resistors connected in series to the contact points, respectively;

a base having a first surface and a second surface opposite to the first surface;

a plurality of projections each disposed on the first surface of the base and having an apex; and

a flat electrode which faces the first surface of the base and with which the projections come into contact, wherein

each current path is provided with a corresponding one of the contact points, said each current path having electrical characteristics thereof adjusted to prevent arc discharge from occurring at the contact point,

for each current path, the adjustment of the electrical characteristic is performed by rendering a resistance of the resistor greater than a contact resistance of the contact point,

the first contacts correspond to the apexes of the projections, the second contacts correspond to portions of the flat electrode with which the apexes of the projections come into contact, and

the resistors are built in the base and the projections.

2. (CANCELED)

3. (CANCELED)

4. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The device according to claim 13, wherein the base and the projections are integrally formed of a same material substrate.

5. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The device according to claim 13, further comprising a common electrode formed on the second surface of the base and connected to the resistors.

6. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The device according to claim 13, wherein the base is provided with a plurality of flexible structures each of which is disposed at a corresponding one of the contact points for absorbing contact pressing force acting between the first contact and the second contact.

7. (ORIGINAL) The device according to claim 6, wherein each flexible structure comprises a beam having ends thereof fixed and is provided with a corresponding one of the projections.

8. (ORIGINAL) The device according to claim 6, wherein each flexible structure comprises a cantilever beam and is provided with a corresponding one of the projections.

9. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The device according to claim 12, wherein a maximum voltage applied to the contacting device is V_{max} and a minimum discharge current for each of the contact points is I_{min} , and wherein each of the resistors has a resistance greater than V_{max}/I_{min} .

10. (ORIGINAL) The device according to claim 1, wherein a maximum voltage applied to the contacting device is V_{max} , a minimum discharge current for each of the contact points is I_{min} , and a total resistance of the contacting device is R_s , and wherein the number of the current

paths is greater than $V_{max}/(R_s \times I_{min})$.

11. (ORIGINAL) The device according to claim 1, wherein for each current path, the adjustment of the electrical characteristics is performed by adjusting a contact resistance of the contact point so that discharge current does not flow through said each current path.

12. (ORIGINAL) The device according to claim 11, wherein a maximum voltage applied to the contacting device is V_{max} and a minimum discharge current for each of the contact points is I_{min} , and wherein each of the contact points has a contact resistance greater than V_{max}/I_{min} .

13. (ORIGINAL) The device according to claim 1, wherein at least one of the first contact and the second contact is formed of one of a metal, oxide and nitride, each of these three substances containing a metallic element selected from a group of tantalum, tungsten, carbon and molybdenum.

14. (ORIGINAL) The device according to claim 1, wherein at least one of the first contact and the second contact is formed of a material having a melting point no lower than 3000°C.

15. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The device according to claim 13, further comprising a stopper for preventing the base and the flat electrode from approaching each other beyond an allowable minimum distance.

16. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The device according to claim 13, wherein the base and the projections are formed of a silicon material which is at least partially doped with impurities for providing the resistors in the base and the projections.

17. – 20. (CANCELED)

21. (NEW) An electrical contacting device comprising:

a plurality of current paths connected in parallel to each other; and

a plurality of electrical contact points each having a first contact and a second contact that are mechanically opened and closed, wherein

each current path is provided with a corresponding one of the contact points, said each current path having electrical characteristics thereof adjusted to prevent arc discharge from occurring at the contact point,

a maximum voltage applied to the contacting device is V_{max} , a minimum discharge current for each of the contact points is I_{min} , and a total resistance of the contacting device is R_s , and

the number of the current paths is greater than $V_{max}/(R_s \times I_{min})$.